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ABSTRACT

While counselor education programs are directly responsible for the didactic instruction and the development of basic counseling skills, they rely on field study sites and site supervisors to help train and produce professional trained counselors. The quality of training and supervision determined the quality of the experiential learning, as well as the ultimate competency level of the intern. This article describes a prototype for the design, organization, implementation, and evaluation of an exceptional field study site training and supervision plan for producing highly competent career counselors. The article outlines the key components of a successful training site and supervision plan, which include meeting the needs of the client through three stakeholders: counselor education department; agency site; and the graduate student. (GCP)

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Career Tracks: Tomorrow's Counselors in Today's Career Centers

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Chapter Twenty

Career Tracks: Tomorrow's Counselors in Today's Career Centers

Marilyn Albert, Nancy Carlton, & Martha Schuster

Introduction

The primary goal of all counselor education programs in colleges and universities is to prepare exceptionally qualified professional counselors for working in a variety of settings with diverse populations. CACREP (Council for Accreditation and Related Educational Programs), the accrediting body of the American Counseling Association, provides specific standards for counseling as well as the specialization of career counseling. These standards are developed for the core competency areas of professional identity, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research and program evaluation. For career counseling, students must also develop career specific competencies related to the foundations of career counseling, the contextual dimensions, consultation, research and evaluation, relevant ethical and legal issues, and clinical instruction.

While counselor education programs are directly responsible for the didactic instruction and the development of basic counseling skills, they rely on field study sites and site supervisors to help train and produce professionally trained counselors. Their role is critical, invaluable, and essential in achieving the core mission of counselor education programs. The quality of training and supervision determines the quality of the experiential learning, as well as the ultimate competency level of the intern.

It is essential, then, that counselor educators take seriously the task of developing extraordinary collaborative relationships with field study sites. In the development of cohesive partnerships, everyone is a winner. The counselor education program fulfills its mission, the field study site is able to expand their services to clients, and the intern is afforded the opportunity to maximize his/her potential for becoming a highly effective career counselor. It is equally essential that field study sites take seriously the quality of training and supervision provided, to help ensure that the client community benefits from services rendered by competent and professional counselors. However, often times this is easier said than

done, and the experience can be one of frustration for all parties involved: the intern, the counselor educator, the training site, and most importantly, the client.

This article describes a prototype for the design, organization, implementation, and evaluation of an exceptional field study site training and supervision plan for producing highly competent career counselors. As the program has developed and evolved over the past several years, the communication and relationship between the California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) Career Counseling Program and the CSUS Career Center has strengthened significantly, igniting a true spirit of collaboration. The following pages outline the key components of a successful training site and supervision plan, which include meeting the needs of the client through three stakeholders: 1) counselor education department; 2) agency site; and, 3) the graduate student.

Consider the Needs of Counselor Education: CACREP Standards

CACREP specifies that career counselor education students must participate in a 600-hour internship in settings where career counseling is regularly conducted, and where they receive at least one hour a week of one-on-one or triadic clinical supervision by an on-site supervisor. A minimum of 240 hours must be spent in direct client contact, and the site must develop measurable outcomes directly related to the standards, as well as processes and procedures for evaluating the achievement of those outcomes. CACREP states that site supervisors should have training in methods of supervision, a minimum of a master's degree, and the appropriate credential when necessary.

The CSUS Counselor Education department has developed an expanded set of guidelines for the selection of appropriate field study sites, as well as a desired sequence of experience for the intern. Based on the belief that new interns may need more intensive supervision, the Department has developed a two-tiered internship model that includes "designated" field study sites in the first half of their experience, and "specialization" sites for the latter half, when their ability to act more autonomously has been developed.

The Counselor Education department has identified the CSUS Career Center as both a "designated" and a "specialization" site, offering students training experiences that help them progress from minimal skill levels to advanced skill levels. The CSUS Career Center meets the CACREP requirements and the Departmental guidelines that place a higher value on the selection of sites that serve a diverse and multicultural client population (approximately 46%), provide client contact for at least 50% of the total field study experience, intentionally work with the interns to

integrate theory with practice, and are willing to take more than one intern per semester. For the past three years, the CSUS Career Center has trained on the average five interns per semester.

Consider the Need of the Site

In 2001 the CSUS Career Center needed to find a way to provide more career counseling services to its 27,000 students, without adding staff. Students were waiting 3-4 weeks to see a career counselor, and the career counselors' no-show or cancellation rates were at 60%. It was time to develop an alternative system to meet the needs of the student clientele.

Internal Audit

The first step to developing any program is in the early planning stages. In the beginning we conducted an internal audit (needs assessment) with the career center staff. They were asked to write down all their job responsibilities in three categories: 1) primary responsibilities, those duties that were part of their original job descriptions and that they believed were essential to their positions; 2) secondary assignments, those that are still a part of their job description, but are recognized as time consumers and not high on their priority list; or, 3) tertiary assignments, those that were given to them, in either the absence of a staff member or an add-on to their original job description.

The staff responses were tabulated and placed on a grid with all responsibilities of all staff members listed down the left side of the sheet. The staff names were place across the top of each column. It became apparent, rather quickly, that there was a huge gap of responsibilities in two distinct areas: 1) immediate career services to students; and, 2) career events management. Since there was only funding for one position, the staff decided to hire a full time events manager since the skills set was different than that of a career counselor. They also decided that if they participated in developing a graduate intern program, with themselves as the trainers and supervisors, they could meet the needs of the growing campus. One career counselor was designated the training supervisor for the program. The training supervisor spends 85% of his/her time implementing the program. The primary responsibilities are selection, training, supervision, evaluation, and administrative duties of the internship program.

Program Description

In 2001, the Career Tracks program was developed in collaboration with the CSUS Career Center and the Counselor Education Department

in order to address the needs of the intern, site and counselor education department. It is a career counseling internship model in which graduate students engage in practical experience providing career counseling in a university career center while receiving training and supervision from practicing career counselors. Career clients get their needs met promptly with access to the greatest amount of resources.

The Career Tracks program provides: 1) opportunities for interns to provide career counseling for a large and diverse clientele. Graduate students provide comprehensive services that can range from providing walk-in career counseling services, to individual appointments, to presenting workshops, to critiquing résumés; 2) a model for program planning that will benefit career centers and/or agencies that offer career counseling services. The site can offer prompt services for larger numbers of career clients at significantly lower cost than adding part-time or full-time staff; 3) a field study site for the counselor education students that has quality training, supervision, and counseling experiences; 4) immediate attention for clients with maximum access to resources.

Consider the perspective of the Administrative Supervisor

To put this program in place there are several key issues to address. We needed to shift the paradigm of staff viewing student assistants as clerical to viewing them as providing a professional service to clientele. There are four key factors to ensure that the shift could take place: 1) staff buy-in, 2) developing job descriptions, 3) sticking to the plan, and 4) program evaluations.

1) Staff buy-in was achieved through continuing to help staff self-assess their program needs, brainstorming with staff on how they can utilize an intern in their program area, and sending staff to professional development programs that address training and supervision models.

2) Developing job descriptions. It is not just enough to request an intern; staff must be clear about what the intern is expected to do, how they are integrated into their program area, what the learning objectives associated with this experience are and how the intern will be evaluated. Taking the time to meet individually with staff is critical. Both the administrative supervisor and the site training supervisor need to meet with each and every program manager to specifically describe the work environment and learning objectives. Special detail must be given to clearly define the expectations of the student intern, site expectations and the counselor education department's expectations. Once all of these special needs are addressed then a job description can be written. These job descriptions are made available to applicants of the program well in advance so the student can then determine with their department if the

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experience will fulfill the student intern and academic requirements for credit. The site personnel do not engage in the credit review.

3) Sticking to the plan. One of the most difficult things for a department full of feeling-perceiving individuals is to stick to a plan. Often, site staff will want to jump in and save the intern, comforting them if the experience appears to expand expectations. Hopefully, this won't happen, but if it does, it is extremely critical to make notes of the discomfort for review later. A job description should be re-written prior to each new semester and must be the overall genesis for the intern's experience.

4) Evaluation planning is essential to the overall success of a program. One cannot hear this enough. Evaluations are linked to previously determined learning objectives in this carefully designed program. Learning outcomes can only be achieved if learning objectives are developed early in the planning stages by the three stakeholders.

Develop the Supervision Plan: Perspective of the Training Supervisor

After the administrative planning stages have been completed, the training supervisor must implement the program. There are six steps in the training supervision implementation phase.

Marketing or Pre-Selection

Develop and distribute internship postings to the counselor education department, classrooms and offices, and at the site. Post information on the web site, make in-person classroom announcements, and write letters to students. Reach the target population of graduate students in a variety of ways so they are fully aware of the program.

Job Descriptions and Selection

The job description should outline requirements that may include graduate career counseling courses, communication skills, computer skills, and number of hours required. State the training and supervision that the intern will receive. Candidates are required to submit résumés, cover letters, and two recommendations when applying; then they are brought in for interviews. All candidates are interviewed and selected by the career counseling supervisors for consideration.

Mandatory Two-Day Training

Interns receive a two-day intensive training session that is mandatory prior to service. Interns that cannot attend the mandatory training at the beginning of the semester will not be selected for that semester. They may re-apply the following semester. The training concentrates on 11

competencies outlined by the National Career Development Association. Interns self-report their own competency levels at the beginning of training. This provides the foundation for the weekly training sequence that will follow for the duration of the internship experience. During the intensive training interns are exposed to the career planning process, career theory, career assessments, tours of the career center and role playing. Training concludes with each supervisor providing the interns with self disclosure statements and supervision agreements that define the intern and supervisor relationship. These agreements are signed by both the intern and the supervisor.

Weekly Training

Weekly training is carefully designed to incorporate topics that meet the needs of the site clientele. Interns receive both practical application and theoretical foundations from which to further develop their skills as career counselors. Weekly training provides the intern with increased knowledge and practical use of assessments (Holland, Super, Krumboltz, Hansen, Schlossberg). Other topics include: the helping relationship and listening skills, developing your own career development philosophy, *Elevations* card sorts, values card sorts, *Strong Interest Inventory, Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Skill Scan, Self-Directed Search, Career Decision Making* as well as interview preparation for career counselors, and case presentations. All training does not have to be conducted by supervisors, but can be done by other staff members or visiting professionals.

Weekly Supervision

Each intern meets weekly with his/her supervisor to discuss a variety of topics. At the beginning of the semester this time is used to clarify the supervisor/supervisee relationship and identify intern competencies. Topics that may be discussed during the weekly meetings might include: observed counseling sessions; helping supervisee to conceptualize and present cases; teaching and demonstrating appropriate interventions; exploring trainee feelings in counseling and supervision sessions; client progress; intern's career counseling philosophy; supervisee's awareness of client needs; developing intern résumé and portfolio.

Evaluation

Evaluations should be conducted three times during the internship: 1) one pre-evaluation, which is a self rating; 2) mid-term, which includes the self evaluation and the supervisor's evaluation; 3) lastly, at the end of the experience. This last evaluation is a combination of self-ratings, supervisor commentary, and the administrative supervisors feedback. The administrative supervisor, site supervisor and the intern should meet

at least once during the experience to hear from both the intern and the supervisor. Both should provide information regarding what went well as well as what could be improved. These findings should be discussed with the supervision staff as soon as possible, and then the process starts all over again making sure to incorporate new information to the process.

Results

Soon after the intern program began, student traffic in the Career Center dramatically increased by 300% and the career counselor no-show and cancellation rates decreased significantly to 2%. The career counselor that took on the trainer supervision role was able to qualify for a higher level position grade and received a raise in base pay. The word around campus was that the Career Center was more accessible than it had been in the past.

Applications for graduate internships increased each semester. Graduate interns were applying for consecutive and progressively more responsibility within the Career Center. Graduate students were writing proposals to the Career Center identifying areas of need and how they could fulfill those needs. Graduate students were accepted to work with on-campus recruitment, career center administration, summer orientations, career resource library management and taking individual appointments. Students were eager to learn all aspects of running a career center including program development, resource acquisition, employer relations, grant writing and budget management. Graduates from this program are easily landing jobs as professional career counselors on college and university campuses and moving quickly to directorships within a few short years. Professional staff are able to free up time to address more serious career counseling concerns with students, work closer in the employer relations area, and engage in career program development and delivery. The career counselors also talked about feeling a sense of renewal about their jobs and enjoying the challenge of developing the program. The result is a stronger internship program and more opportunities for graduate students to have a field study site that relates directly to their chosen profession. A grant was awarded by the student government, which offers stipends for the graduate students who complete their internships. Now the students can get academic credit, a small stipend for their work, and valuable work experience.

Summary

Career Tracks is beneficial for college or university career centers and students, for government or non-profit agencies who offer career

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development services, and for counselor education departments who need field study sites. Interns help graduate and undergraduate students as well as alumni by providing counseling that encompasses all parts of the career planning process. Many graduate students do the internship to get field study units from their counselor education department while some value the experience so much that they do the internship for professional development without receiving academic units. Career Tracks gives sites or agencies who offer career development services a blueprint for developing a career counseling internship program that will serve their clientele without increasing their budgets. Counselor education departments develop field sites in which they are confident their students are being given high quality experiential learning opportunities. Students are often willing to travel in order to get the counseling experiences.

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